



Green Spring Gardens Park

4603 Green Spring Road • Alexandria • Virginia 22312

phone: (703) 642-5173 • fax: (703) 642-8095

www.greenspring.org

USING NATIVE PLANTS TO ATTRACT BIRDS IN THE WASHINGTON, D.C. AREA AND VIRGINIA

Gardening for wildlife is a unique type of gardening that aims to attract and sustain desirable wildlife as well as beautify the landscape. Using native plants to attract birds that add glorious color and song to your garden is the focus of this information sheet.

Why Grow Native Plants for Wildlife?

Native plants are species that grow in the region in which they evolved. Gardeners who grow native plants celebrate the beauty of our native flora and help foster diversity. In addition, native plants greatly benefit wildlife. According to the National Wildlife Federation, native plants may support 10 to 50 times as many species of wildlife as non-native plants.

The Needs of Birds

Food - Plants provide food for birds in many forms: nectar, seeds, fruits, nuts, acorns, cones, buds, twigs, leaves, flowers, and sap, as well as harboring tasty animals such as insects and spiders. A landscape with many different plants can support birds with a diversity of appetites. Plant native species with the goal of providing food sources throughout the year. Plant two or more plants of each species whenever possible - better pollination will result in higher fruit and seed set, and the plants will be more visible to birds.

Fruits that ripen from spring to midsummer are often sweet and eagerly eaten by birds that feed on fruit. These early fruits include juneberry or serviceberry, wild cherry, red mulberry, elderberry, and strawberry. In the fall, fruit with a high fat content is especially helpful to fruit-eating birds because it helps them build up their fat reserves— fruit from plants such as spicebush, magnolia, sassafras, and dogwood are especially welcome to both migrating and overwintering birds. Fruits that persist over the winter often have a lower fat content, so they are less likely to turn rancid and rot. Some persistent fruits include chokeberry, sumac, bittersweet, rose hips, hawthorn, juniper cones, bayberry, and winterberry holly. This persistent food can also provide sustenance to fruit eaters in early spring.

Water - Birds need water for drinking and bathing. They also need water to cool themselves in the heat of the summer, and prefer to bath in shallow puddles and pools. Consider garden ponds (the best for all types of wildlife) and birdbaths (not very useful to other types of wildlife) if you are not near natural bodies of water. Birds especially like pools with dripping or running water. Garden ponds should have a shallow area so wildlife can easily enter and exit the water, and avoid drowning. Pea gravel, logs, or rocks can be used to create this shallow beach area. Birds also need water in the winter.

Cover (Shelter) and Space (Territory) - Birds need cover as protection from predators, for nesting sites, and as shelter from harsh weather. Provide at least one clump of conifers or broad-leaved evergreens in or near your garden for birds – they provide cover the entire year.

Snag trees (standing dead trees) that are not a safety hazard should be left for many birds that make their homes in hollow areas, including owls, woodpeckers, and songbirds. Dead trees also provide plenty of insect larvae for birds such as woodpeckers to eat. Nest boxes can be mounted on dead trees or in other areas to provide nesting sites.

In addition to habitat requirements, another factor that needs to be considered is the space or territorial requirements of different birds. Some bird species need a great deal of space to thrive and are very territorial (e.g., a nesting pair of hairy woodpeckers needs about 40 acres of land), while other species need less territory. Developed urban or suburban areas attract very different bird species than large tracts of natural areas, such as mature forests, grasslands, or marshlands. **This highlights the critical importance of preserving natural habitats to protect our rich biological diversity. Many birds have very specific habitat requirements, or are found in specific areas of the state at certain times of the year (most birds are migratory). Most bird species will not be attracted to gardens, especially if there are no large natural areas nearby, and can only be enjoyed and preserved in their native habitats.**

Excellent information about birds is available on U.S. Geological Survey web sites. Mason Neck National Wildlife Refuge is our closest U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service refuge, and they have 208 birds species on their 1995 checklist, with 17 additional species that have been recorded only once or twice at the refuge (www.npwrc.usgs.gov/resource/othrdata/chekbird/r5/masoneck.htm). The Mason Neck list contains seasonal occurrence and relative abundance information for each species. Patuxent Research Refuge in Maryland also has an excellent bird checklist (www.npwrc.usgs.gov/resource/othrdata/chekbird/r5/patuxent.htm). The internet checklist from Patuxent was updated in 1996 and a more up-to-date copy (2000) is available at the refuge itself. In addition to the type of information on Mason Neck's list, Patuxent's web site also describes the preferred habitat of each species on the refuge. The Patuxent Bird Identification InfoCenter (www.mbr-pwrc.usgs.gov/id/frm1st/frm1st.html) has photographs, identification tips, distribution maps, life history information, songs, and videos about North American birds. *A Birder's Guide to Virginia* (1999) is an excellent source of information about the birds in our region.

Hummingbirds

Hummingbirds are some of our most beloved birds - John James Audubon called hummingbirds "glittering garments of the rainbow." The ruby-throated hummingbird is the only hummingbird species in our area. It is especially attracted to red and orange flowers that are tube shaped, such as bee balm, trumpet creeper, wild columbine, and cardinal flower. They are also attracted to other flower colors. These nectar sippers are busily pollinating plants as they feast. Hummingbirds also feed on insects, spiders, and tree sap from sapsucker-drilled holes. To attract hummingbirds, grow masses of the same plant to provide large quantities of nectar, and grow a diversity of plants that bloom at different times of the year. Hummingbirds nest in trees or large shrubs, and prefer openings in the forest and forest edges. Trees and shrubs are also used by the small birds for perching and as food sources. They love to use soft, fuzzy materials to line their nests: dandelion tufts (one good reason to keep some weeds in your lawn!), thistle down, cinnamon fern fuzz, and pussy willow are some of their favorite materials.

Additional Tips for Gardening for Birds

Use pesticides sparingly, if at all. Pesticides can harm birds directly, and insecticides can indirectly poison insect-eating birds. To attract birds, limit the size of your lawn – it doesn't provide much in the way of food or habitat for birds. Leave some leaf litter in a small area of your yard for the birds, or mulch your garden beds with leaf mulch – leaf litter generally has a good supply of earthworms, insects, and other animals. The Carolina wren, for example, is attracted to leaf mulch where it probes for insects and spiders.

Each bird species has specific habitat niches for nesting and feeding, and the more diverse your garden is the wider the range of bird species you may attract. Some bird species like open, sunny areas, while others like woodlands or forest edges. Mimic nature and grow layers of vegetation to satisfy the nesting, shelter, and food needs of many birds – a canopy of tall trees, an understory of smaller trees and shrubs, and a herbaceous layer of varying heights, with the layers intertwined by vines.

Recommended Plants

Most listed plants are growing in the Virginia Native Plant Garden, the Backyard Wildlife Habitat Garden, and other gardens at Green Spring. Plants are native to Virginia unless otherwise noted



(the abbreviation of at least one state they are native to is given) – all listed plants are native to the eastern and southeastern United States

More detailed cultural information about most of these plants is available in Green Spring's Plant Information Sheets. **The following plants have ornamental value and documented (published) wildlife value. Plants that are best for naturalistic use, and not appropriate for use in more formal gardens, are noted.** If species are listed as having female and male plants (dioecious), a male plant is needed for the female plant to set fruit.

Codes

H = nectar plant for ruby-throated hummingbird

BD = Food for birds (not including hummingbirds) from plants: seeds, fruits, nuts, acorns, cones, buds, twigs, leaves, flowers, and sap. Other important uses are noted if the plant is not a food source.

Sp. (plural is spp.) = species

Medium-sized to Large Deciduous Trees

****Acer saccharum*** (sugar maple) & ***A. rubrum*** (red maple; these 2 spp. are the most ornamental); ***A. negundo*** (boxelder) & ***A. saccharinum*** (silver maple; the later 2 spp. for naturalistic use) - BD: several spp. eat dry fruit in summer & fall

****Aesculus flava*** (yellow buckeye)- H (***A. pavia*** is a better H plant - see small trees)

****Betula nigra*** (river birch) & ***B. lenta*** (sweet birch; naturalistic use) – BD: some birds eat non-showy flowers & dry fruit

****Carpinus caroliniana*** (American hornbeam or ironwood; can be a small tree in some sites) – BD: dry fruit

****Carya* spp.** (hickory) – BD: pick at nut scraps discarded by squirrels or crack them themselves

****Celtis occidentalis*** (northern hackberry; naturalistic use)– BD: numerous spp. consume fruit (fall & winter food)

****Diospyros virginiana*** (persimmon; usually male & female plants but sometimes have both sexes on the same plant) – BD: wild turkey (not at Green Spring), American robin, & cedar waxwing (at Green Spring some winters) will eat fruit & seeds in the fall & winter

****Fagus grandifolia*** (American beech) – BD: numerous spp. eat nuts

****Fraxinus*** (only female trees fruit): ***F. pennsylvanica*** (green ash) & ***F. americana*** (white ash; both spp. best for naturalistic use) – BD: dry fruit eaten by several spp.

****Halesia diptera*** (large-flowered silverbell; native to GA, etc.; attracts H in the deep south & possibly here if H have arrived from migration when it blooms; possibly BD) & ***H. tetraptera*** (common silverbell; BD: dry fruit eaten by birds such as woodpeckers)

****Juglans nigra*** (black walnut) – BD: nuts (probably pick at nut scraps discarded by squirrels but may crack them themselves)

****Liquidambar styraciflua*** (sweet gum) – BD: numerous spp. eat seeds

****Liriodendron tulipifera*** (tulip tree) – H; BD: some birds eat dry fruit in fall & winter

****Magnolia acuminata*** (cucumber tree magnolia; naturalistic use) – BD: numerous spp. consume fruit (fall & winter food)

****Morus rubra*** (red mulberry; male & female plants but sometimes have both sexes on the same plant; naturalistic use) - BD: summer fruit loved by numerous spp.

****Nyssa sylvatica*** (sour gum or black gum)– BD: fruit loved by numerous spp. beginning in late summer (fall food for migrant & resident birds)

****Ostrya virginica*** (American hophornbeam; hard to find commercially; can be a small tree in some sites) – BD: buds & dry fruit

****Platanus occidentalis*** (sycamore; naturalistic use) – BD: seeds eaten in the winter by seed-eating birds such as American goldfinch; nesting sites (lots of nesting cavities in older trees)

****Prunus serotina*** (black cherry; naturalistic use) - BD: numerous spp. eat fruit in summer & also eat the many insects attracted to the plant

****Quercus* spp.** (oak) – BD: acorns eaten by numerous spp.



- * ***Robinia pseudoacacia*** (black locust; naturalistic use) – BD: seeds eaten by spp. such as northern bobwhite (not at Green Spring) & mourning doves (appears to attract H in the central part of the US but not mentioned in literature for the east coast)
- * ***Salix nigra*** (black willow) – BD: many spp. eat non-showy flowers in spring & dry fruit later
- * ***Sassafras albidum*** (sassafras) - BD: fruit is eaten by numerous spp. beginning in late summer (fall food for migrant & resident birds)
- * ***Taxodium distichum*** (bald cypress) – BD: waterfowl eat seeds in fall & winter
- * ***Tilia americana*** (basswood) – BD: some spp. eat the seeds
- * ***Ulmus americana*** (American elm) – BD: some spp. eat the seeds in late spring like American goldfinches

Note: eastern cottonwood (***Populus deltoides*** – woodpeckers like for nesting sites) & aspen (***P. tremuloides***; nesting sites in cavities also) should be left in sites where found naturally because not very ornamental in our region – BD: non-showy flowers, buds, twigs, & foliage eaten

Small to Large-sized Evergreen Trees (small trees are noted; year round shelter & cover)

- * ***Ilex opaca*** (American holly; male & female plants) – BD: several spp. eat the fruit (winter food)
- * ***Juniperus virginiana*** (eastern red cedar; mostly female & male plants but some plants have both sexes) – BD: fall & winter food (fleshy cones attracts numerous spp.)
- * ***Magnolia grandiflora*** (southern magnolia; recently became VA native – range expanding from NC) - BD: numerous spp. eat fruit (fall & winter food)
- * ***Pinus strobus*, *P. taeda*, & *P. virginiana*** (white, loblolly, & Virginia pine, respectively) - BD: seeds eaten by several spp.; ruffed grouse & wild turkey (neither spp. at Green Spring) eat the needles; sap is also eaten; needles used in nest construction
- * ***Thuja occidentalis*** (American arborvitae; small tree in cultivation) – BD: seeds; mostly valued for cover

Note: ***Tsuga canadensis*** (Canadian hemlock) is a wonderful native tree for cover & food, but it has problems with hemlock woolly adelgid, an exotic insect that is seriously harming this species. Several states, including VA, MD, and W VA, have had releases of a Japanese ladybird beetle to try to control this pest. This beetle is not available commercially & research continues.

Small Deciduous Trees

- * ***Acer pensylvanicum*** (striped maple) – BD: dry fruit
- * ***Aesculus pavia*** (red buckeye; NC native, etc.) & ***A. sylvatica*** (painted buckeye; can be a large shrub; naturalistic use) – H (would have to be at end of bloom period when H first arrive from migration)
- * ***Amelanchier* spp. that are trees such as *A. arborea*, *A. canadensis* (sometimes a shrub), *A. × grandiflora* (USDA says this is *A. laevis*), & *A. laevis* (Juneberry, serviceberry, or shadblow)** – BD: numerous spp. love fruit in early summer
- * ***Asimina triloba*** (pawpaw; grow at least 2 plants with different genetic backgrounds [no problem if grown from seed] to have good fruit production) – BD: occasionally fruit eaten by wild turkey (not at Green Spring) & possibly other birds if small mammals don't get to it first (early fall)
- * ***Cercis canadensis*** (redbud) – BD: seeds eaten by northern bobwhite (not at Green Spring) & a few other birds (attracts H in some parts of the US but blooms in April here & H would arrive too late in an average year)
- * ***Chionanthus virginicus*** (fringetree; functionally dioecious: plants with fertile flowers have fruit – many plants don't fruit) – BD: fruit eaten by many spp. in late summer & early fall
- * ***Cornus alternifolia*** (pagoda dogwood) & ***C. florida*** (flowering dogwood)– BD: fruit for numerous spp. of migrant & resident birds in the fall
- * ***Crataegus phaenopyrum*, *C. viridis*, & *C. crus-galli*** (the last sp. is best for naturalistic use; hawthorn) – H; BD: fruit eaten by numerous spp. - winter food; favorite nesting spot for many spp.
- * ***Hamamelis virginiana*** (witch hazel) – BD: seeds eaten by a few spp. such as wild turkey & northern bobwhite (neither spp. is at Green Spring), & many birds like the dense cover
- * ***Magnolia macrophylla*, *M. fraseri*, *M. tripetala*, & *M. virginiana*** (some non-Virginia germplasm of this sp. is evergreen) - BD: fruit is fall & winter food for numerous spp.



****Viburnum prunifolium*** (blackhaw viburnum) & ***V. rufidulum*** (southern blackhaw viburnum) – BD: fall & winter fruit eaten by several spp. (viburnums usually not self-fruitful so need 2 or more plants of a given sp. with different genetic backgrounds [good if grown from seed])

Deciduous and Evergreen Shrubs (evergreen shrubs noted)

****Aesculus parviflora*** (bottlebrush buckeye; native to SC, etc.) & ***A. sylvatica*** (painted buckeye) – H

****Alnus serrulata*** (hazel alder or smooth alder; naturalistic use) – BD: several spp. eat non-showy flowers, & cover near water

****Aralia spinosa*** (Devil's walking stick) – BD: fruit eaten by several spp. in fall

****Aronia arbutifolia*** (now ***Photinia pyrifolia***; red chokeberry; BD: several spp. eat fruit in winter – don't eat right away because bitter – squirrels will eat earlier than birds) & ***A. (Photinia) melanocarpa*** (black chokeberry) – BD

****Callicarpa americana*** (American beautyberry) – BD: several spp. eat fruit in the fall & into winter

****Castanea pumila*** (chinkapin – a shrubby chestnut; naturalistic use) – BD: nuts eaten

****Ceanothus americanus*** (New Jersey tea; naturalistic use) – BD: seeds eaten by some spp.

****Cephalanthus occidentalis*** (buttonbush) – H; BD: wood ducks (rarely at Green Spring), mallard ducks, & other waterfowl like the fruit & seeds

****Clethra alnifolia*** (summersweet) – H; BD: dry fruit & attracts many beneficial insects; ***C. acuminata*** likes moist woodland conditions (naturalistic use)

****Cornus amomum*** (silky dogwood; naturalistic use) & ***C. sericea*** (redosier dogwood – both spp. are great for dense cover) – BD: numerous spp. eat fruit in late summer & early fall

****Corylus americana*** & ***C. cornuta*** (hazelnut; naturalistic use) – BD: eat buds, non-showy flowers, & nuts, as well as dense cover

****Euonymus americana*** (American euonymus or hearts-a-bursting; naturalistic use) – BD: seeds eaten in the fall by a few spp. like cardinal, wood thrush, & brown thrasher

****Gaylussacia frondosa*** (dangleberry – a type of huckleberry; naturalistic use) & ***G. baccata*** (black huckleberry – very slow growing; naturalistic use) – BD: fruit eaten by several spp. in summer

****Hydrangea arborescens*** (wild hydrangea) – BD: some spp. eat seeds such as wild turkey (not at Green Spring; poisonous compound in the plant, especially in leaves & buds)

****Ilex decidua*** (possumhaw holly), ***I. glabra*** (inkberry; evergreen; fruit not as palatable as some spp.), & ***I. verticillata*** (winterberry holly; male & female plants for all hollies) – BD: numerous spp. eat fruit; *I. decidua* & *I. verticillata* are good sources of winter food – grow the spp., not cultivars, for best wildlife value – fruit will be more palatable to birds since not selected for long retention

****Kalmia latifolia*** (mountain laurel; evergreen) – BD: warblers nest in them (spp. mentioned are migrants here – nest in the VA mountains & elsewhere); ruffed grouse feed on buds, foliage, & twigs (not at Green Spring); cover

****Lindera benzoin*** (spicebush; male & female plants) – BD: fall food for numerous spp. of migrant & resident birds

****Myrica* (now *Morella*) *pennsylvanica*** (***M. cerifera*** is evergreen but harder to grow here) (bayberry; can have male & female plants, or some plants with both sexes on the same plant) – BD: numerous spp. eat fruit in fall & winter (migrant & resident birds)

****Osmanthus americanus*** (American osmanthus, wild olive, or devilwood; evergreen; naturalistic use; male & female plants) – BD: fruit in late fall & winter; cover

****Physocarpus opulifolius*** (ninebark) – BD: many spp. nest here; some spp. eat the dry fruit

****Prunus maritima*** (beach plum; naturalistic use – found in sandy or rocky soils in nature; extremely rare in VA) – BD: fruit (has not fruited at Green Spring – need at least 2 plants with different genetic backgrounds to have fruit [good if grown from seed])

****Rhododendron* spp.** (native azaleas): ***R. arborescens***, ***R. atlanticum***, ***R. calendulaceum***, ***R. canescens*** (native to NC, etc.), ***R. cumberlandense***, ***R. periclymenoides***, ***R. prinophyllum***, & ***R. viscosum*** – H reported on many spp.

****Rhododendron carolinianum*** (Carolina rhododendron; evergreen; native to NC, etc.) & ***R. maximum*** (rosebay rhododendron; evergreen) – H (also like to eat spiders living here); BD: cover



Rhus aromatica (fragrant sumac; male & female plants or sometimes both sexes on the same plant), ***R. copallinum*** (shining sumac; male & female plants), & ***R. typhina*** (now ***hirta***; staghorn sumac; male & female plants) - BD: numerous spp. eat winter-persistent fruit; many birds also eat insects hiding in them; cover

****Rosa carolina***, ***R. palustris*** & ***R. virginiana*** (wild rose) - BD: numerous spp. eat fruit – especially in late winter when food is scarce; cover & nesting sites

****Rubus odoratus*** (flowering raspberry; the showiest member of this genus – other common names of spp. in this genus are blackberry & dewberry) – BD: fruit in this genus eaten by numerous spp. in the summer; excellent cover & nesting sites (on large properties it is good to leave some of the less ornamental spp. in out-of-the-way areas for their wildlife value)

****Sambucus canadensis*** (now ***S. nigra*** subsp. ***canadensis***; elderberry; naturalistic use) – BD: fruit eaten by numerous spp. in summer

****Vaccinium corymbosum*** & ***V. stamineum***, (blueberry; naturalistic use for the last sp. – the first sp. is the large-fruited sp. that people eat; *V. pallidum* is a common sp. in the wild in MD & VA - preserve it where you find it) – BD: numerous spp. eat fruit in early summer to midsummer

****Viburnum acerifolium***, ***V. nudum*** var. ***cassinoides***, ***V. dentatum***, & ***V. nudum*** var. ***nudum*** (viburnum) – BD: fall & winter fruit for several bird spp. (tastiest eaten first); note: viburnums usually not self-fruitful so need more than one plant of a given sp. with different genetic backgrounds [good if grown from seed])

Note: Some native shrubs are primarily used for cover & sometimes nesting sites: ***Itea virginica*** (Virginia sweetspire), ***Leucothoe fontanesiana*** (drooping leucothoe, evergreen), ***Leucothoe racemosa*** (sweetbells leucothoe), ***Spiraea alba*** var. ***latifolia*** (white meadowsweet or spirea), & ***Xanthorhiza simplicissima*** (yellowroot; tall groundcover)

Vines (all woody)

****Bignonia capreolata*** (crossvine) - H

****Campsis radicans*** (trumpet creeper) – H

****Celastrus scandens*** (American bittersweet; male & female plants but some plants have both sexes) – BD: fruit eaten by numerous spp. (winter persistent)

****Gelsemium sempervirens*** (yellow jessamine) - H (would have to be at end of bloom period when H first arrive from migration) – poisonous to people, & even to insects some of the time

****Lonicera sempervirens*** (trumpet honeysuckle) – H (Baltimore oriole also – not at Green Spring); BD: fruit eaten by several spp. in late summer onward

****Parthenocissus quinquefolia*** (Virginia creeper; naturalistic use) – BD: fruit eaten by numerous spp. (fall & winter)

****Vitis*** spp. (wild grape; naturalistic use) – BD: numerous spp. eat fruit beginning in late summer; many insect-eating birds nest among grapevines & numerous spp. use grape bark in their nests

Other Woody Plants that are Valuable to Birds for Food & Cover but Disliked by Humans (on large properties, it is good to leave plants of these spp. in out-of-the-way areas for their wildlife value):

Poison ivy (*Toxicodendron radicans*) & greenbrier or catbrier (*Smilax* spp.)

Herbaceous Perennials or Wildflowers

****Actaea pachypoda*** (doll's eyes or white baneberry) – BD: some birds feed on the fruit such as American robin – poisonous to humans & many animals

****Aquilegia canadensis*** (wild columbine)- H (would have to be at end of bloom period when H first arrive from migration); BD: seed liked by a few birds such as dark-eyed junco & other sparrows

****Arisaema triphyllum*** (Jack-in-the-pulpit) –BD: fruits & leaves eaten by wood thrush & wild turkey (not at Green Spring) - caustic to most animals

****Asclepias tuberosa*** (butterfly weed; H – they also eat the insects attracted to butterfly weed); ***A. syriaca*** (common milkweed; best for naturalistic use – aggressive spreader), ***A. incarnata*** (swamp milkweed), ***A. exaltata*** (tall milkweed), & ***A. verticillata*** (whorled milkweed) - BD



***Aster** spp. that perform well in our area include *A. cordifolius* (*Symphyotrichum cordifolium*), *A. divaricatus* (*Eurybia divaricata*), *A. grandiflorus* (*Symphyotrichum grandiflorum*), *A. laevis* (*Symphyotrichum laeve*), *A. lateriflorus* (*Symphyotrichum lateriflorum*), *A. macrophyllus* (*Eurybia macrophylla*), *A. (Symphyotrichum) novae-angliae*, *A. oblongifolius* (*Symphyotrichum oblongifolium*), *A. (Symphyotrichum) patens*, *A. (Eurybia) spectabilis*, & *A. umbellatus* (*Doellingeria umbellata*) - BD

***Chelone glabra** (white turtlehead; naturalistic use) - H

***Coreopsis auriculata**, **C. major**, **C. rosea** (MD native, etc.), **C. tripteris**, & **C. verticillata** – BD

***Dicentra eximia** (wild bleeding heart) – H

***Echinacea purpurea** (eastern purple coneflower) & **E. pallida** (pale purple coneflower; both spp. native to central US & naturalized in VA – do not grow near populations of native *E. laevigata*, which is federally endangered & much harder to grow) – BD: seed eating birds in the fall such as American goldfinches & chickadees

***Eupatorium (Conoclinium) coelestinum** (mistflower), **E. hyssopifolium** (hyssopleaf eupatorium), **E. perfoliatum** (boneset), **E. fistulosum**, & **E. purpureum** (last 2 are the most common species of Joe-pye weed in VA - *E. maculatum* is rare here) – BD; do not grow *E. rugosum* (*Ageratina altissima*) – highly invasive, very poisonous to humans, and slightly less poisonous to livestock

***Geranium maculatum** (wild geranium) – BD: spp. such as mourning doves & northern bobwhite (not at Green Spring) eat seeds

***Helianthus** spp. (perennial sunflowers): **H. angustifolius**, **H. decapetalus**, **H. divaricatus**, **H. hirsutus**, **H. maximiliani** (naturalized in VA – introduced from central US), & **H. strumosus** - BD; note: annual *H. annuus* introduced from the Plains states

***Heliopsis helianthoides** (false sunflower) – BD

***Hibiscus coccineus** (GA native, etc. – naturalized in VA), **H. laevis (militaris)**, & **H. moscheutos** (subsp. **palustris** merged with this sp. now) – H (*H. coccineus* would probably be the best sp. because red-flowered)

***Iris cristata** (dwarf crested iris) – possibly H (would have to be at end of bloom period when H first arrive from migration)

***Liatris aspera** & **L. spicata** (liatris, blazing star, or gayfeather; the first sp. needs dry, open sites to thrive – has not done well in heavier soils w/ crowding at Green Spring but loves my home garden, where I seldom irrigate) – BD: seed eaters like finches, dark-eyed junco, & other sparrows

***Lobelia cardinalis** (cardinal flower) - H

***Medeola virginiana** (Indian cucumber root; naturalistic use) - BD

***Mertensia virginica** (Virginia bluebells) – occasionally H (would have to be at end of bloom period when H first arrive from migration)

***Monarda didyma** (bee balm) – H: this plant is best or red hybrids for H, but **M. fistulosa** attracts H also

***Mitchella repens** (partridgeberry; technically a woody plant but prostrate so looks like a perennial) – BD: fruit eaten by several spp. & leaves eaten by some birds like ruffed grouse & northern bobwhite (neither spp. is at Green Spring)

***Opuntia humifusa**; prickly pear) – BD: fruit

***Penstemon hirsutus** & **P. digitalis** (penstemon) – H

***Phlox divaricata**, **P. glaberrima**, **P. nivalis**, **P. paniculata**, **P. pilosa**, **P. stolonifera**, & **P. subulata** (phlox) – BD (occasionally H)

***Polygonatum biflorum var. commutatum** (solomon's seal; naturalistic use) – possibly H (reported in the Midwest but not reported on western PA web site); BD

***Rudbeckia laciniata** (cutleaf coneflower; naturalistic use), **R. fulgida** (eastern or orange coneflower), **R. maxima** (great coneflower; native to LA, etc.), & **R. subtomentosa** (sweet coneflower; native to TN, etc.) - BD

***Salvia lyrata** (lyreleaf salvia; naturalistic use) – H

***Senna (Cassia) hebecarpa** & **S. marilandica** (wild senna; naturalistic use - reseeds readily) – BD

***Silphium perfoliatum** (cup plant), **S. terebinthinaceum** (prairie dock), **S. laciniatum** (compass plant: native to OH, etc. but naturalized in VA), **S. asteriscus** (southern rosinweed), **S. trifoliatum** (whorled rosinweed), & **S. integrifolium** (prairie rosinweed; native to TN, etc.) – BD; note: very tidy gardeners may want these spp. for naturalistic use only



**Solidago caesia*, *S. flexicaulis*, *S. roanensis*, *S. rugosa*, & *S. sphacelata* 'Golden Fleece' (goldenrod; also *S. juncea* & *S. speciosa* for naturalistic use, & *S. odora* for dry, sandy soil) – BD

**Spigelia marilandica* (woodland pinkroot or Indian pink; native to NC, etc.; naturalized in VA) – H (in NC & SC literature – we have not seen H on this at Green Spring; poisonous to humans so this may also limit its use by animals)

**Viola canadensis*, *V. pubescens*, *V. sororia*, & *V. striata* (violet; very tidy gardeners may want for naturalistic use only) – BD: not a major food source but many plant parts eaten

Herbaceous Perennials That Are Not Highly Ornamental And Somewhat Weedy But Valuable To Birds

**Fragaria virginiana* (wild strawberry; white-flowered & sweet fruit; do not get confused with the yellow-flowered Indian strawberry [*Duchesnea indica*], a native of Asia – fruit is not sweet) - BD

**Phytolacca americana* (common pokeweed) – BD

Ornamental Grasses (BD: seeds from summer into winter; excellent cover – especially the taller grasses)

**Andropogon virginicus* (broomsedge bluestem), *A. ternarius* (splitbeard bluestem; needs dry, sandier soils), *A. glomeratus* (bushy bluestem; needs wet sites, unlike most members of this genus which like drier soils), & *A. gerardii* (big bluestem; naturalistic use – tends to be floppy in gardens)

**Chasmanthium latifolium* (river oats; naturalistic use - reseeds readily)

**Elymus hystrix* (*Hystrix patula*) (bottlebrush grass) & *E. canadensis* (Canada wild rye) – both spp. are best for naturalistic use

**Eragrostis spectabilis* (purple lovegrass; naturalistic use in dry or sandy soils)

**Muhlenbergia capillaris* (pink muhly or purple muhly) – sparrows like seeds

**Panicum virgatum* (switchgrass) – important plant for many sparrow spp.

**Saccharum giganteum* (*Erianthus giganteus*, giant plume grass) & *S. brevibarbe* var. *contortum* (*E. contortus*, bent-awn plume grass)

**Schizachyrium scoparium* (little bluestem) – dark-eyed junco & other sparrows eat seeds

**Sorghastrum nutans* (Indian grass)

**Sporobolus heterolepis* (prairie dropseed)

**Tridens flavus* (purpletop or redtop; best for naturalistic use - reseeds readily)

**Tripsicum dactyloides* (eastern gamagrass; naturalistic use)

Ornamental Sedges (BD: seeds, & cover for taller spp.)

**Carex grayi*, *C. pensylvanica*, *C. plantaginea*, & *C. shortiana*

Note: *Carex vulpinoidea* (naturalistic use) – in wetland areas in nature but can tolerate moist garden soil; waterfowl eat seeds, & use for cover & nesting areas

Ferns

**Osmunda cinnamomea* (cinnamon fern) – brown fuzz at the base of the fronds is a favorite hummingbird nesting material

Biennials

**Ipomopsis rubra* (standing cypress; NC native, etc.) - H

**Rudbeckia hirta* (black-eyed Susan; biennial to short-lived perennial) & *R. triloba* (three-lobed coneflower; biennial to short-lived perennial) - BD

Annuals

**Impatiens capensis* (jewelweed; naturalistic use) – H



Herbaceous Perennial Plants Solely for Water Gardening

****Nymphaea odorata*** (American white waterlily) – BD: seeds eaten by ducks; mockingbirds use leaves of a hybrid in my personal garden for bathing sites

****Peltandra virginica*** (green arrow arum) – BD: seeds eaten by wood ducks (rarely at Green Spring) & rails (all 3 spp. in VA on the 2001 VA Rare Animal List from the Division of Natural Heritage; occasionally found at Mason Neck); cover

****Pontederia cordata*** (pickerelweed) – BD: seeds eaten by ducks

****Sagittaria latifolia*** (broadleaf arrowhead or common arrowhead; other spp. also) – BD: end of rhizomes dug up & eaten by waterfowl

****Schoenoplectus tabernaemontani*** (13 other names have been used in the past including *S. lacustris* var. *tabernaemontani* & *Scirpus validus* – still commonly see under old names; a rush-like sedge) (softstem bulrush, great bulrush; needs a large pond) – BD: seeds eaten; stems eaten by geese; nesting sites & cover for water birds

Zizania aquatica (annual wildrice; for large wetland areas) – BD: seeds eaten by mallard, wood duck, red-winged blackbird (last 2 spp. rarely at Green Spring; blackbirds eat seed before it is ripe), & other birds that are on the 2001 VA Rare Animal List from the Division of Natural Heritage (sora – a rail occasionally found at Mason Neck; bobolink - found in a few mountain counties)

Developed by Brenda Skarphol, Curatorial Horticulturist

© 2003

Updated 1-2003; Native Plants for Birds

